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ABSTRACT

An experiment with reflective teaching methods was conducted with six undergraduate and seven graduate student teachers majoring in applied linguistics and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching and minoring in education. The student teachers were placed in urban elementary, middle, and high schools in a variety of ESL program types and with a variety of student proficiency levels. Each wrote in a journal and compiled a teaching portfolio during the 15-week student teaching experience, both to promote reflection on teaching practice and to allow assessment of their progress. The portfolio was to include reflections on both successful and unsuccessful teaching, to be complemented by seminar discussions and readings encouraging reflection. Journal entries (free-written and on assigned topics), students' reading discussions and questions, notes from observations and student teacher conferences, portfolios, and final portfolio reflections were analyzed for emerging themes and connections among them. Salient themes included: encountering a wide range of differences among students; teaching the lesson vs. teaching the students; gaining insights into students' learning; and reconstructing teaching knowledge. Results are discussed, using excerpts from student writings, and recommendations are made for teacher education. Contains 10 references. (MSE)

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Promoting ESL Preservice Teachers' Reflection on Learning How to Teach Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students

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Yu Ren Dong

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Promoting ESL Preservice Teachers' Reflection on Learning How to Teach Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students

When dealing with linguistically and culturally diverse students, reflective teaching becomes a vital part of teacher education in that preservice teachers need to quickly identify and address these students' needs and backgrounds and to communicate with the students their expectations in order to build a classroom community of learners. Unlike teaching regular students, a reliance on teaching intuition and experience to get to know students often does not work in this setting, instead a constant reflection and a self inquiry become critical and more urgent in second language teaching. Despite the fact that reflective teaching has been discussed widely in the literature, still the developmental pattern of preservice teachers' professional growth through reflection is sparsely studied in the context of second language teaching. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the patterns of students' reflections over time in the context of second language teacher education.

Previous Literature on Teacher Reflection and A Developmental Pattern of Becoming a Teacher

Preservice teachers' reflection on their student teaching experience is important for their professional development. Schon (1987) addressed the importance of using the reflection process to acquire *professional artistry* , the competence in dealing with unexpectedness, tensions, and confusion in actual teaching, for preservice teachers. According to Schon, preparing students for solid and rigorous professional knowledge is not enough, we have also prepare them for *professional artistry*. This competence can be acquired by reflecting on teaching actions. Reflection involves critically observing the phenomenon, describing the problem, making connections between theory and practice, seeking solutions, and testing out the hypothesis. Applying Schon's reflection theory to the ESL teacher education context, I argue that although preservice teachers have acquired professional knowledge when they embark on their student teaching practicum, they may not have acquired the competence in reflection which leads them to

professional artistry. As a result, they are often confused and frustrated by the mismatches, tensions, and conflicts between what they have learned in the classroom with what they found out in actual teaching. More importantly student teachers' knowledge about their teaching contexts, specifically, the students are very often lacking. Therefore, I believe the student teaching experience should provide a rich context for students to learn how to reflect, experiment, and solve problems and it is crucial for college supervisors to emphasize and to stimulate reflection when supervising student teachers.

Zeichner and Tabachnik (1991) identified four areas of desired teacher reflection. They are academic, reflection upon subject matter and the representation and translation of subject matter knowledge to promote student understanding; social efficiency, reflection on the thoughtful application of particular teaching strategies that have been suggested by research on teaching; developmental, reflection on students' interests, thinking, and patterns of developmental growth; and social constructive, reflection on the social and political context of schooling and assessment of classroom actions.

Compared to subject matter and pedagogical knowledge and reflection, reflection on the learners and their characteristics and on social and political context of schooling is often provided in a limited and artificial fashion in teacher preparation program. In the field of second language teaching, the need for reflection on the learners is even more urgent when dealing with ESL students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds are often different from each other and from the teacher and whose expectations and needs are so diverse that an ESL student teacher is often less prepared for or anticipated. The challenge of learning to teach students not merely the subject in an ESL class becomes so paramount due to these differences that preservice teachers' intuition and their own school experiences cannot help much. They often have to rely on their sensitivity when interacting with their students and on their willingness to actively seek information from their students and build the teacher-student relationship. However, according to Berliner's (1986) and Kagan's (1992) research on teacher development, the preservice teacher's focus on their students often comes in late in their teaching practicum; and for some, it may never come. In the stages of

teacher development, preservice teachers very often preoccupy themselves with the procedural teaching tasks, such as teaching routines, at the beginning stage. It was not until they become automatic about these tasks before they can focus on the learners and teaching the content from the perspective of their students. However, with an increasing number of nonnative English speaking students in the inner city schools and academic learning challenges, ESL preservice teachers need to recognize their multicultural student body and develop sensitivity to student diversity and competence to work with these students as soon as possible. All this calls for ESL preservice teachers constantly examining the impact of their own beliefs and assumptions about second language learning and teaching as well as their students' needs and expectations in their instructional practices. In this article, I reported my study on the use of structured reflections to speed up the developmental stages reported in the literature to see how novice teachers mature in their thinking about their students and teaching. My research questions were: 1) What pattern emerged in the thinking of student teachers over the course of their student teaching experiences? and 2) What characteristics and impact did student teachers' knowledge about their students have on their development of becoming ESL teachers?

Method

Between fall 1996 and spring 1997, I taught two student teaching seminars to altogether 13 students, including seven graduate students in fall 1996 and six undergraduate students in spring 1997. These students majored in applied linguistics and TESOL and minored in education at a four year college in New York City which has both undergraduate and graduate teacher training programs. Prior to student teaching, student teachers had all taken the required linguistics and educational courses and had some previous local public school observational and tutorial experiences. These student teachers were approaching the end of their programs, which were the approved programs for the city teaching certifications from K through 12. They were placed in seven high schools, four elementary schools, and one middle school in New York City. They worked in different ESL programs, ranging from pulled-out, self-contained, to push-in (the

program where ESL teachers stay in the mainstream classroom assisting ESL students while mainstream teachers conduct classes) and at various language proficiency levels, ranging from the advanced ESL class to the beginning class, from the preliterate class (the lowest level placed by the students who not only had lowest level of English language proficiency but also had interrupted or no schooling in their native countries) to the mixed class where students with different language proficiency levels were grouped together.

Student teachers who enrolled in the student teaching practicum usually spend an average of 15 hours worth of field work in their teaching sites each week, and one and half hours in my seminar on campus. As a center stage of my student teaching seminar, I assigned the students to compile teaching portfolios during a semester of 15 weeks of student teaching. The purpose of the portfolio compilation was twofold: One, to broaden and deepen their understanding of teaching through reflections and the other, to assess their growth over time. Students were given freedom to choose the pieces that best represented their growing process as an ESL teacher in their portfolio compilation. Among the series of artifacts that students selected, there were lesson plans, their students' works, self-designed tests, creative visual presentations, photos, cooperating teacher's and school's recommendation letters, evidence of school involvement and professional development such as staff meetings and parent meetings.

In order to use the portfolio as a tool for the students to reflect on their teaching practices, rather than simply showcasing their successful teaching, I encouraged them to include reflections on both successful and unsuccessful teaching, using their students' voice in portfolio presentation, and I also structured the seminar in such a way that the developmental process of teaching and the connection between teaching and learning as well as thinking after teaching were emphasized. For example, I designed a series of assigned readings as our focal discussion topics for weekly seminars and each student was assigned to be responsible for raising probing questions and relating the reading to their teaching practices. Based on their experiences and concerns at different stages, I also structured the topics for their weekly journal entries to bring their attention to these concerns and experiences in addition to the journal entries from their own topics. For the final

portfolio presentation, I asked them to pick three pieces within their portfolios as presentations of their teaching selves and their progression and write about them. For the undergraduate group, facing their concerns about lack of knowledge about their students' cultures and literacy backgrounds, I assigned them to read at least two pieces of immigrant young adolescent literature works and do a case study on one student about his or her home country literacy learning experience. Each week, we set aside time for weekly journal sharing and reading discussion. Periodically, students shared their ongoing portfolios with their peers.

Data Analysis

Several data sources were used for this study. For the graduate seminar in fall 1996, I collected the following: 1) both free journal entries and focused journal entries (See the Appendix), 2) students' reading discussions and questions, 3) notes from my observations and post observation conferences with student teachers, 4) portfolios, and 5) final portfolio reflections. For the undergraduate seminar in spring 1997, I collected also their cross-cultural literacy case study reports in addition to all in the above. Using data analysis procedures proposed by Glazer and Strauss (1967) and Goetz & LeCompte (1984), I began data analysis as I collected the writings from the students. Using analytic inductive procedures, I identified the emerged themes and used them to guide my further data collection. Also, using constant comparative procedures, I looked for connections among the categories emerged from different sets of data. In doing so, I tried to get a clear picture of what went on and to identify the salient themes that were raised from the data analysis.

Results

Several salient themes of students' reflection on their teaching practices emerged from data analysis. They are:

1. Encountering a wide range of differences in students
2. Teaching the lesson or teaching the students

3. Gaining insights into students' learning

4. Reconstructing teaching knowledge

Encountering A Wide Range of Differences in Students

Student teachers began teaching with a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty. This feeling was intensified quickly in ESL classrooms when student teachers realized that even some of the routinized tasks could be problematic with a class of students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds were so different. Although student teachers felt they were prepared for the content and pedagogical knowledge, their concern for working with students with whom they have little educational or cultural exposure was overwhelming even at the beginning. The following were taken from their beginning dialogue journals.

> **Lee**: Once when I was handing back papers, pronouncing names became a problem. I noticed that many students write their last names first, making it all that much more difficult to call out their names. Many times I couldn't tell which name was which (a dialogue journal entry).

> **Terry** (student taught at an elementary school): In the fourth grade class that I work with, most of these students are ESL, not all of them. Some of them were even born here but they have a very low reading level. There are about thirty students in the classroom. From what I was informed, these students have a lot of family problems. For example, one little Russian girl brought a doctor's note to the teacher stating that she has a glass eye because she was knifed in the eye in 1993 (She was only 5!). Another student has an alcoholic father who is abusive to him and his mother. The student has severe behavioral problems. These are only two examples; there are many. How are students with serious personal problems supposed to focus on their schoolwork if their own parents/guardians don't show any concern? How are we, as teachers, supposed to handle this? (a dialogue journal entry)

> **Helen** (student taught at a high school): I have always worked with very outgoing students and very mixed classes. This class was 95% Asian and were not verbal in the least. I felt extreme pressure and nervous because I wasn't sure how I was going to reach these students. I had never dealt with such a one-group class and was extremely frustrated on how to cope with this. (a dialogue journal entry)

Teaching the Lesson or Teaching the Students

Student teachers' passions and desires for working with linguistically and culturally diverse students and their teaching realities quickly moved them into the complexity of teaching and the grappling with various tensions and problems. Many student teachers voiced concerns and dilemmas that they were in when they tried to address their students' needs at the same time trying to complete their lessons. For example, knowing that using visual aids could help with ESL

students' comprehension, Victor decided to use a handout to illustrate how to use the clustering technique to write a composition on "My native city" in his beginning level ESL class. On the handout, he hand drew a chart to provide information necessary for the composition, such as native cities where his students come from, population, geographic location, etc. That day I was there observing him teaching. He first modeled the clustering technique, and then he shared a composition he wrote with the class. But when he gave out a handout and asked the class to fill out the cluster diagrams with the information given on the handout about their native cities, however, the class did not seem to understand what was going on. Very few students did the diagram, while the rest of the class were confused and asked for help. Realizing that his students had not caught on, Victor re-explained furiously the cluster technique to the exclusion of student participation and learning. At the post observation conference, I went over with Victor every scene of the lesson trying to help him figure out what the problem was. Victor went home continuing to reflect on this event. Later on he realized that although the lesson was appropriate, his handout was over his students' heads. The handout was not clearly organized and appropriately designed to suit his students' needs. Although students learned about the clustering technique, they were unfamiliar with his organization and presentation of information on the chart format. In addition, some students did not know whether they were supposed to write about their country or their city, since some information on the handout was about the country. And finally, some students had different set of information about their cities, such as the geographic location and the population, which did not match with the information provided by him. After conceptualizing the event, Victor decided to give this technique another try. He designed another handout in the follow-up lesson. This time the handout was composed by a series of questions asking students about their native cities. It was more tailored to his students' needs and levels and also offered his students ample opportunities to brainstorm before getting into the writing task. It worked. Victor reflected on this event and the value of constant reflecting and self-evaluating on his own teaching like this:

> **Victor** (student taught at a high school): In retrospect, I realized that it would have been more effective to present hand-out number four before attempting to write the first draft of the native city composition. During our weekly seminar meetings, we have discussed the necessity of spontaneous decision making as well as careful and thoughtful lesson

planning. My experience with the native city composition seems to suggest that neither one of these essential skills can compensate for the accumulation of trials and errors in the classroom. However, if we immediately evaluate the factors that caused a lesson to fail, which in my case it was my lack of knowledge about my students, we can often plan an effective follow up lesson to get the unit back on course (the final portfolio reflection).

Encouraging student teachers to include their lessons that either worked or did not work in their portfolios, students had a chance to gain insights into their knowledge about teaching and learning. In doing so, reflections added depth and reality to our weekly reading and discussion. Seminar discussion based on those reflections helped student teachers develop a critical stance toward puzzling situations and some of the unsuccessful teaching decision making. Sally revealed how she went about developing this reflective and critical stance toward her own teaching.

> **Sally** (student taught at an elementary school): I was teaching the theme *food* to first and second graders. I gave the children an activity to compare quantities of pasta and large and small pasta. As the activity began it became evident that the children did not understand what to do, they became restless and distracted. I was not sure what to do: whether to stop the activity or not. Unfortunately I did not, instead I tried to explain and found myself giving more and more complex directions verbally without success. I had misjudged the situation and did not handle it well. Although the lesson was unsuccessful, I learned a great deal from the experience and found myself reflecting on the lesson for a long time after (for longer than I have reflected on successful lessons). I realized that instructions need to be evident in the task and the fewer verbal directions the better. (following directions is an essential skill for the children to acquire but it needs to be done systematically). In addition the verbal directions when given need to be in simple language, on the kids level. I also realized the need to have a backup task in case something fails and the necessity to be flexible in changing tasks (the final portfolio reflection).

The challenge of moving beyond teaching the lesson to teaching the students was discussed by student teachers as they progressed in the semester. Keyed to her students' participation, Terry shared her excitement on a lesson on reading Molly's Pilgrim with her 4th grade class. From that lesson, she realized the importance of connecting to her students' previous experience and making content knowledge come alive in ways that motivate her students to learn.

> **Terry** (student taught at an elementary school): This week we read the book Molly's Pilgrim to the 4th grade class. The students enjoyed the book. They were able to relate to it, since Molly was an immigrant and so are 95% of these children. I feel it's important to use materials that are relevant to the students' lives... We watched the movie based on the book. Students did a book report and completed a sequence of events exercise on the book. They made Venn diagrams comparing the similarities and differences of the book and the movie. They also did an art activity, where they made their own Pilgrim dolls-just like the students in the book... I have learned from this experience and from class that it's of utmost significance to connect lessons to the students' lives so that they are meaningful

to them. I have seen in the classroom that lessons are more successful and motivating when related to the students' lives (a dialogue journal entry).

Gaining Insights into Students' Learning

As students became more inducted into their teaching, their knowledge about students was both broadened and deepened. Terry was teaching in a push-in program, where she worked with the 4th grade reading and ESL teachers in a lowest reading level class. Not long into her student teaching, Terry identified her problem with a particular student, Edward. Once Edward was so disruptive that Terry had to send him to the principal. As weeks passed by, Edward's problem was excerabrated and special education teachers were sent in to make a final evaluation on him. However, one day, Terry's perception of this student changed.

> **Terry** (student taught at an elementary school): My cooperating teacher asked a "good" student to stand in back of the classroom because he was talking. That student began to cry. [Edward], the trouble-maker, began laughing at this student and was making fun of him. I decided to go up to [Edward] and ask him how he would feel if he was crying and somebody else was laughing at him. He told me that he never cries in school because he is always crying at home when his father (who is an alcoholic) and his brother beat up on him. When I heard this, I got so upset that I left the room and started to cry. It was truly a sad situation. I couldn't believe what this 9 year-old has to go through every day. I learned the most valuable and rewarding lesson. I feel that teachers' number one priority should be the students' needs, not the book or the content material itself. I have seen too often teachers placing too much emphasis on the book and overlooking the students' needs. This of course is difficult with so many students to meet every individual's needs, but we should try our best. This child that I mentioned, [Edward], has a lot of personal problems, as well as behavioral ones (obviously). As I mentioned in my journal, he has an alcoholic father who beats up him and his mother. This student teaching experience has made me more aware of students' needs. It is especially difficult in the field of ESL, where students are culturally and linguistically diverse. It is difficult for them because they must not only learn English but also get accustomed to American culture. We, as ESL teachers, must be aware of these important issues and consider them when teaching. We must be caring, supportive, and concerned about our students (a dialogue journal entry).

Terry's compassionate account of her experience and her reflection showed a turning point in her teaching when she realized the need to reach out to her students in order for learning to take place. With the support of her cooperating teachers, they informed the school of child's home situation. In dealing with Edward, Terry used a lot of positive reinforcement and individual attention. That made a difference. Due to her and her cooperating teachers as well as the school's intervention, Edward did not go to special education program and began to achieve. Terry included a piece of Edward's writing and also a photo of Edward's attentive learning in class.

Helen was teaching a class of students who were predominately Asian. She had difficulties in engaging students to participate. Reading articles on the cultural differences in class discourse patterns and Asian silence behavior at our weekly seminars informed Helen. Instead of blaming her students for being unwilling to try, she contacted Chinese bilingual teachers at the school to gain further understanding about her students. In her journal and final reflection, Helen noted the students' excitement and participation in her break-through lesson on American dreams. In this lesson, she invited students to talk about their future jobs and that opened the conversation and provoked students' participation. Reflecting on her success, Helen wrote,

> **Helen** (student taught at a high school): Teachers also need to understand the cultures that are in the classroom and how to handle certain situations. Teaching also teaches you something different about your students and the lesson you taught. After certain lesson, I look back on what I would have strengthened or weakened in that lesson to be more valuable or interesting to the students, or reading articles about how to make sure that all students are participating equally or at least sometimes and not pick on the same "good" or "verbal" students (the final portfolio reflection).

Dealing with teenagers who come from other cultures, who often live with relatives or single parents, and have financial and personal problems, a sensitivity to diverse students is essential for public school teachers in general and ESL teachers in particular. Nancy wrote in her final reflection about this episode in her class.

> **Nancy** (student taught at a high school): When we were talking about what they would buy if they had $1000.00. Eliza has only been here for a few months and is doing wonderfully. However, some days she just puts her head down on the desk and starts crying. She doesn't wish to talk about what is wrong. When I was going around the room helping students, most of them were writing things like cars, clothes, etc. When I came to Eliza, her paper had only one sentence: "I would buy a airplane ticket to Dominican Republic and never come back." I did not know the acculturation process for these teenagers could be this difficult. During this semester's readings and other semesters as well we have learned about the difficulties that students face when they come here with their families and are forced to leave their friends and relatives. They are faced with culture shock, loneliness, and isolation in their new homes. A sensitive teacher must be aware that new students are struggling with the challenges of a new life that far exceed learning a new language. As I am aware of this situation for Eliza and for the other students as well, I always try to present my classroom as a warm and nurturing place where they can feel safe and will be accepted and as a place where they can acquire some valuable tools which will help them to begin to enjoy their new life in America. (the cross-cultural literacy case study report)

In addition to the cultural shock experienced by many ESL students, student teachers also found out other problems faced by their students. In their cross-cultural literacy case studies, they

investigated ESL students' reading and writing experiences back in their home countries, their perceptions about schooling and the teacher, their dreams and lives. In her interview with a Russian student, Gelene learned about the rigor of Russian education and at the same time the frustration felt by her Russian student, which she did not know before.

> **Gelene** (student taught at a high school): He is very frustrated about still being in high school at age of 19. If he were at home in Russia, he would have completed technical college for cooking by now and be working. His comment about being stuck in school clearly showed his frustration. I checked his LAB test score and he did not pass. The test passing grade gets higher for students in upper ESL levels. I don't what what options there are for students like him. (the cross-cultural literacy case study report)

Victor not only interviewed the student but also talked with the Chinese guidance counselor in the school for more insights. The investigation not only added to his knowledge about the cultural differences in schooling but also led him to realize the complex or even a painful journey of this cross-cultural transition for some teenagers. By stepping back for a moment from what they were doing and looking and listening from their students' perspectives, Victor wrote in his case study report,

> **Victor** (student taught at a high school): The cross-cultural transition can be traumatic, for young people in a vast variety of ways, depending on their individual backgrounds and personal circumstances. It is important to give students time to make the adjustment and to allow for some flexibility if an individual attitude seems to be somewhat less than exemplary. This is one of the most important lessons that has repeatedly revealed itself to me through the whole student teaching experience. (the cross-cultural literacy case study report)

Reconstructing Knowledge about Teaching and Learning

As student teachers had more confidence in themselves as teachers, they started to examine and to compare what was happening in their classroom teaching and learning with what they learned in their course work. In doing so, they began to see gaps as well as connections between the principles and theories with the teaching practices. Sally for example, who resisted content ESL teaching prior to her student teaching, questioned her assumptions of second language acquisition and tried to make sense of the goal of teaching ESL to school-aged children.

> **Sally** (student taught at an elementary school): I entered the program with the perception that communication is the primary goal of the ESL teachers. I see now that the role of the ESL teacher is much broader and encompasses many different facets of which communication is only one. As the ESL program is school based, it is essential to focus on learning strategies and academic language. This should be done from within a content area

approach and that the ESL teacher focuses on content in congruence with the class teacher as much as possible. (the mid-term reflection)

Sally's inquiry went further when she used her classroom practice to test out some of those principles and techniques that she learned in the methods prior to her student teaching, as illustrated by Sally. Her first-hand teaching experience changed her perceptions of looking at ESL teaching from the students' perspective.

> **Sally** (student taught at an elementary school): After presenting and discussing the topic (bats), reading a book and making a web, I gave each group a different reference material and had marked the paragraph where they could find the answers. I was surprised at how difficult the students found the task. Even the more fluent children had difficulty extracting information from the reference material. I realized that this was not only a language issue but more the lack of learning strategies and I decided therefore to include an aspect of learning strategies in each lesson with my 3rd and 5th grade group. This was easier said than done for a variety of reasons. I used the CALLA handbook to determine which strategies are important and added some of my own to the list that I created. I found, though, they were quite difficult to introduce because they demanded a lot of teacher talk, which the children find difficult to follow (I prefer activities where the children learn through doing)... I think it was on the whole only partially successful and it is something that I would like to research more (the final portfolio reflection).

Student teachers' growth was also captured in their ways of viewing lesson plans. At the beginning, student teachers often viewed lesson plans as a safety net and they were so afraid to deviate from the lesson plans. I still remember the vignette Gelene's "lost and found" lesson plan. That incident happened in her first month of student teaching. One day 15 minutes before class, Gelene suddenly found that her lesson plan was missing. Too nervous to teach without a lesson plan, she made a trip back home in the busy morning traffic to search for her lesson plan. Fortunately she found it and got back just in time for her class. Gelene included her lesson plan in her portfolio and wrote,

> **Gelene** (student taught at a high school): If [my] lessons were left at home, I could have reconstructed it fairly quickly. I can make interactive decisions with my students since I know them more, such as shortening or eliminating an activity due to time constraints; reteaching a concept in a different way [if students don't understand], deciding how long to spend on a chapter, and interrupting a lesson to correct a student's behavior. Also I have fewer butterflies in my stomach going into the classroom (the final portfolio reflection). (final portfolio reflection)

Mary progressed to be able to break down the walls of teacher as an authority. She participated in several after school events with her students, thus established a good rapport with her students. She talked about her teaching self in her final reflection like this:

Mary (student taught at a high school): Lindley in his article "The source of good teaching" states "The source of energy that drives good teaching is the child in the teacher." I believe this to be true for me. I have reached a point where I can have fun with the students and be comfortable. I am able to let them see that I too make mistakes and that is all right to do so up to a certain point. I have realized that when I let myself have fun with the class, my overall lesson works out better. It flows better, and the students are more motivated. When I am rigid, I feel as Lindley states, "They go through motion, and the students go through the motion, but there is no energy, no joy" (p. 161). In this environment students are not motivated and learn less. (the final portfolio reflection)

Morain grew in her ability to foresee the problematic areas for her students and to come up with various ways of solving these problems. This enabled her to approach the content from the perspectives of her students and in doing so, she was on her way to become an effective teacher.

Morain (student taught at a high school): This week went relatively well. I'm not sure if it's a matter of learning a bit more each day, the lessons as a whole, or the cooperation of the students. Maybe it's a combination of all three... I tried the plan at home with my family, and the problems I anticipated became apparent during this trial period. Rather than changing course and plan, I attempted to answer these difficulties and thought out alternative procedures and guidelines for the students. Being able to recognize the possible difficulties and selecting a specific course of action to overcome these obstacles was an invaluable lesson to me as a future teacher. (a dialogue journal entry)

As time went by, they were able to see beyond their own lessons and their own class to the ESL curriculum and the school culture. As the semester ended, their thoughts continued and they became more thoughtful in dealing with diverse students in their classrooms.

Morain (student taught at a high school): One girl in my level one class was born here, but speaks Chinese at home. She told me the only language she knows is English because she cannot read or write in Chinese. Yet she tested so poorly on the LAB that she was placed in L1. My question is? Why ESL? I know many English speaking students wouldn't pass the LAB. Is this strictly a numbers game for the district? Wouldn't this student benefit in another class? (a dialogue journal entry)

Sally: The whole issue of cultural diversity has been on my mind this last week (possibly because of the Ferdman's article and Thanksgiving). I think being a non American has made me more aware of it. There I was teaching Thanksgiving to a whole lot of other non Americans, I tried to link it to holidays from their cultures and found a mixed response: Some kids were happy and eager to talk about other holidays, but a Russian girl refused to discuss anything about Russian culture--may be she did not know or wants to forget. These issues are very complicated--Is my responsibility to reinforce the links? Is she (for whatever reason) ashamed of her background? Must I encourage her to talk about it or leave it? Dealing with emotional and psychological issues is very difficult when there is a language barrier. (a dialogue journal entry)

Discussion

My experimentation with using a series of reflective experiences in ESL teacher education has brought me several insights. First, in contrast to other studies saying that student teachers developed their thoughts on learning to teach in predictable ways, from becoming automatic with classroom routinized teaching tasks to know about their students (Berliner, 1986; Kagan, 1992), my study revealed that working with a class of diverse students who are not only learning the language, but the culture and academic subjects all at once, student teachers' knowledge about the learner came in earlier. The teaching contexts in which the student teachers are situated are unique which demand for an early recognition of students needs and great sensitivity on the part of the teacher. It is often impossible to ignore but to consider their learners right away as illustrated by my student teachers' reflections. Therefore, the developmental stages of preservice teachers' growth need to be reexamined.

Second, emphasizing the reflective use of portfolios, most of the students in my classes were able to go beyond simply showcasing their portfolios to reflect on their teaching practices. Research has shown that the teacher's growth often comes from grappling with the uncertainty and tensions and when teachers are reflecting on both successful and unsuccessful teaching. Therefore, it is beneficial to engage students in reflection on these issues as they arise. Reflective teachers often need time and the opportunity for examining and analyzing their teaching. Structured journal entries and the cross-cultural case study as well as the mid-term and the final portfolio reflection provided students with the opportunities, thus cannot only provoke reflection but also accelerate students' professional growth. With the reflection as a continued thread of their portfolio compilation, the final portfolios are more revealing and have more depth.

Third, rather than focusing on survival skills in student teaching practicum as indicated by the developmental studies in teacher professional growth (Berlinker, 1986; Kagan, 1991), I structured my student teachers experience in the way that fostered their inquiry about students' learning and teaching contexts. In my efforts to promote development in needed areas, the areas which usually take longer time for development, such as the knowledge about the learners and their

needs and an examination of the relationship between theory and practice, I pushed the thinking of the students by posing questions to all and by assigning the cross-cultural literacy study to the undergraduate group. Comparing graduate and undergraduate students' final portfolio reflections on three most memorable events or pieces from their portfolios that best representing them as ESL teachers, undergraduate student teachers' reflections had higher frequencies of inclusion of events and pieces that were associated with their knowledge about their students, their learning from students, and multicultural aspects of teaching than graduate student teachers. Could it be the difference made by the cross-cultual literacy case studies? All this points to the need for further investigation of the potential for the college supervisor's intervention in student teachers' professional development.

Fourth, one factor contributing to the difference in student teachers' reflection could be the environment that they were in. The students who exhibited reflective attitudes were also the students who were placed in an environment where reflective teaching was nurtured and encouraged by their cooperating teachers. These students often shared at the weekly seminars about how their cooperating teachers' questions provoked their reflection, how their cooperating teachers questioned the effectiveness of their own lessons and shared their own uncertainties and concerns with them from time to time. Unfortunately this study was not able to document the reflection provoked by the cooperating teacher and the interaction between the cooperating and the student teacher. However, it raised the important issue of the future student teaching placement and the potential for establishing the collaborative college and school teaching sites to enhance reflective teaching.

Fifth, as a teacher researcher, I began my student teaching seminar with an influence of the developmental model, hoping reflection will bring my student teachers to look at teaching and learning from their students' perspectives; but I did not anticipate my student teachers' immediate concern and their articulations of diverse students' needs at the very beginning of their student teaching. My students' writing and class discussion informed me of the teaching realities and challenges. As a result, I changed my writing assignments to keep up with their thinking and

progression and I began to question the developmental model. Looking back and reading my student teachers' reflections helped me crystallize some of the problems and difficulties that student teachers have experienced in the field. Those insights into preservice teachers thinking can inform us, teacher educators, to design and to structure our teacher training courses to counteract "sink-or-swim" mentality and to foster the student teacher's professional growth.

Finally, my study also revealed the concern mentioned by Zeichner and Liston (1987). Very often under the current apprentice and knowledge transmission teacher education model and institutional structures, both the college and the school emphasize on knowledge display rather than inquiry and learning from mistakes. At the student teaching stage, student teachers are under the pressure for demonstrating their knowledge about teaching and getting favorable evaluations rather than for reflecting on their teaching practices. Believing that student teaching is the final demonstration of what they learned and what they could do, some students were hesitant to reveal an unsuccessful lesson. Although in my seminar I tried to create a safe environment for reflection and encouraged students to examine both successful and unsuccessful teaching, this belief has been strong. All this prevents some student teachers from fully engaging in the reflective thinking process.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

This study points to the direction of redefining the task of teacher educators in promoting students reflection and enhancing student teachers' professional development. Such reflection should become a structured part of teacher educational programs. 16

- **Creating A Reflective Environment**

Since teacher reflection renders teacher learning, teacher educators need to create an environment which promotes teacher reflection on their practices. Writing journals and reflections provides time and a structure for teaching student teachers to reflect. In addition, demonstrating how to use the journal for reflection and periodically sharing their thoughts with the class are needed to model the reflective process and foster the reflective conversation among student teachers.

- **Structuring Reflective Experiences**

The key to insure reflective process in portfolio compilation is to structure reflection so as to provide students opportunities to review their portfolios and reflect on constantly rather than wait until the final product. In view of my student teachers' change of thoughts about teaching, it shows that teacher educators' structure of their reflective experience, such as paralleling the reading discussions with focused topics for journal reflections and inviting students to reflect on what they perceived to be both successful and unsuccessful lessons and on the uncertainties, confusion, and tensions between what they learned and what they encountered in the classroom is necessary in building their reflective habit and self-evaluation. Thus, the teaching portfolio here is no longer just a presentation of the teacher's best performance, but also a process to show the student teacher's progression in their professional development.

- **Fostering Teachers' Reflection on Diverse Students**

Both as a predicator of teachers' professional growth and as an urgent demand for ESL teachers in particular, it is important for the teacher educator to orient students' attention to their students and structure the activities, such as cross-cultural literacy case studies, that foster and shape their reflection. When I introduced our preservice teachers to students' previous literacy learning experience, they saw both their students' learning and teaching in a new way. Also, when the student teachers focus on their students and ways to adapt instruction to meet their students' needs, I see a natural integration and interaction of their content and pedagogical knowledge.

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APPENDIX

Focused Journal Writing Topics

Topics at the beginning of your student teaching

Write about your students

--Who are they?

--What are their strengths?

--What are their linguistic, educational, cultural backgrounds?

Write about your cooperating teacher and how s/he deals with students' needs

--What have you learned from him or her?

--What kind of role does he or she play?

--What kind of role do you play?

--What are your concerns so far?

Topics for Mid-term reflection

How do you negotiate and make meaning of the tensions, conflicts, and mismatches between what you learned at college and what you found out in your teaching site?

--Have you made any interactive decisions? If yes, how?

--What do you know about ESL teaching curriculum in your school?

Topics for final portfolio reflection 19

Pick three events or pieces of portfolio collections that best show your growth as an ESL teacher over time